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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 ROME 005003

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR EUR, EUR/WE, EUR/RPM, SA

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TAGS: [MOPS](#) [MASS](#) [PREL](#) [EAID](#) [AF](#) [IT](#) [EUN](#) [AFGHANISTAN](#)

SUBJECT: ITALY: MFA ON TROOPS AND PRT IN AFGHANISTAN,
ACCELERATED DISBURSEMENTS, AND EU TROIKA VISIT

REF: A. ROME 4933

- [1](#)B. STATE 303817
- [1](#)C. ROME 4427
- [1](#)D. STATE 305542
- [1](#)E. 10/31 COUNTRYMAN-BURKHEAD E-MAIL
- [1](#)F. USNATO 1111

CLASSIFIED BY: POL MINCOUNS THOMAS COUNTRYMAN, REASONS 1.5 (B) AND (D).

[1](#)1. (S) SUMMARY: KEY MFA INTERLOCUTORS SIGNAL THAT ITALY'S ASSESSMENT OF SENDING A PROVINCIAL RECONSTRUCTION TEAM (PRT) TO GHAZNI IS MOVING FORWARD. THEY DOUBT THAT ITALY WOULD BE ABLE TO SEND 1,000 OEF TROOPS TO KHOWST TO REPLACE U.S. MARINES THERE (SEE ALSO SEPTEL). THEY ALSO REPORTED BRIEFLY ON THE PRESIDENT'S PHONE CALL TO PM BERLUSCONI, URGING ACCELERATED DISBURSEMENT OF ITALY'S AFGHAN ASSISTANCE, AND ON THE RECENT EU TROIKA VISIT TO AFGHANISTAN. END SUMMARY.

[1](#)2. (S) ON NOVEMBER 3, A/POLMINCOUNS, ACCOMPANIED BY POLOFF, MET TOGETHER (AT THEIR SUGGESTION) WITH MFA SPECIAL COORDINATOR FOR AFGHANISTAN ENRICO DI MAIO AND NATO OFFICE DIRECTOR GIOVANNI BRAUZZI. DISCUSSION FOCUSED ON REF B REQUEST FOR ADDITIONAL ITALIAN MILITARY SUPPORT IN AFGHANISTAN, FOLLOWING UP ON OUR APPROACHES TO DEFENSE MINISTER MARTINO (REF A) AND THE PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE (SEPTEL). (NOTE: DI MAIO AND BRAUZZI WERE ALSO AWARE OF, BUT DID NOT DISCUSS, OUR REF B REQUEST FOR ITALIAN FORCES TO REMAIN IN IRAQ "WELL INTO 2004." BRAUZZI HAD INDICATED IN AN EARLIER CONVERSATION THAT HE FORESEES "FEW PROBLEMS" IN RENEWING ITALY'S DEPLOYMENT OF FORCES IN IRAQ. END NOTE.) A/POLMINCOUNS OUTLINED THE REQUEST FOR A RETURN OF APPROXIMATELY 1,000 ITALIAN TROOPS TO AFGHANISTAN TO REPLACE U.S. MARINES IN KHOWST AND THE PROPOSAL THAT ITALY PROVIDE A PRT IN GHAZNI FROM JANUARY 2004 FOR AT LEAST ONE YEAR. BOTH DI MAIO AND BRAUZZI HAD BEEN BRIEFED ON OUR REQUESTS PREVIOUSLY.

[1](#)3. (S) BRAUZZI LED OFF BY REFERRING BRIEFLY TO THE REQUEST FOR A RETURN OF TROOPS TO KHOWST IN MARCH 2004, SAYING THAT IT WILL BE DIFFICULT FOR ITALY TO SEND ANOTHER LARGE DEPLOYMENT TO AFGHANISTAN AT THAT TIME BECAUSE ITS FORCES ARE ALREADY STRETCHED THIN WITH EXISTING DEPLOYMENTS (IRAQ, BALKANS). A/POLMINCOUNS NOTED THAT DEFMIN MARTINO HAD SEEMED MORE FORTHCOMING, INDICATING THERE MIGHT BE SOME QUESTION ABOUT TIMING AND THAT HE NEEDED RECOMMENDATIONS FROM HIS MILITARY STAFF, BUT NOT SUGGESTING THAT THE REQUEST WOULD BE REJECTED (REF A). BRAUZZI CONFIRMED THAT THE MOD IS STILL ASSESSING THE REQUEST, AND SAID A REPLY WOULD NOT BE READY BEFORE THE WEEK OF NOVEMBER 10.

[1](#)4. (C) BOTH BRAUZZI AND DI MAIO WERE QUITE FORTHCOMING IN THE ENSUING DISCUSSION ON A POSSIBLE ITALIAN PRT, HINTING THAT ITALIAN AUTHORITIES ARE LOOKING FAVORABLY AT AGREEING TO THIS REQUEST. THEY UNDERScoreD THE IMPORTANCE ITALY WILL PLACE ON PRT LINES OF AUTHORITY. BRAUZZI SAID ITALY WOULD WANT ITS PRT (AND, EVENTUALLY, ALL PRTS) TO BE UNDER THE AUTHORITY OF NATO VIA ISAF, NOT AUTONOMOUS OR "A PART OF PHASE IV OEF OPERATIONS". WHILE ADDITIONAL OPERATIONAL DETAILS WOULD BE WELCOME THROUGH CENTCOM OR THE EMBASSY, ITALY WOULD EXPECT TO MAKE ITS PRT CONTRIBUTION THROUGH ISAF. (COMMENT: WHEN WE PRESSED THEM ABOUT THE OPERATIONAL CONSEQUENCES OF SUCH AN ARRANGEMENT, BRAUZZI AND DI MAIO CLEARLY WANTED TO HAVE IT BOTH WAYS: WHILE THEY WANT ANY ITALIAN PRT TO OPERATE "UNDER NATO AUSPICES", THEY ARE EXTREMELY CONCERNED ABOUT PRT SECURITY VULNERABILITIES AND WANT OEF (READ AMERICAN) FORCES ON TAP TO INTERVENE IF NECESSARY. END COMMENT.)

[1](#)5. (C) THE TWO DISCUSSED THE IMPORTANCE OF PRTS FOR EXTENDING SECURITY AND STRENGTHENING PRESIDENT KARZAI'S POSITION IN THE RUN-UP TO ELECTIONS, BUT ALSO SAW PRTS AS A WAY TO EXTEND ISAF-BASED SECURITY BEYOND KABUL. BRAUZZI SAID ITALY WAS LOOKING AT THE PRTS FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF ITS BALKAN EXPERIENCE. CIVILIAN PRT PERSONNEL MIGHT FALL UNDER THE AUTHORITY OF THE ITALIAN AMBASSADOR IN KABUL, WHILE THE MILITARY COMMANDER WOULD REPORT TO THE NATO-ISAF COMMANDER. BOTH EXPRESSED PARTICULAR INTEREST IN WASHINGTON'S VIEWS ON THE LATTER ARRANGEMENT.

[1](#)6. (C) DI MAIO AND BRAUZZI CITED THE ITALIAN MILITARY'S

IN THEIR JUST-CONCLUDED SERVICE IN KHOWST AND IN ONGOING WORK IN THE BALKANS. DI MAIO SAID POLICE TRAINING, COUNTER NARCOTICS ENFORCEMENT, AND JUDICIAL REFORM COULD BE EXPANDED BY INCORPORATING TRAINERS AND JUDGES INTO PRTS. HE ENCOURAGED THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY TO CHANGE ITS PERSPECTIVE ON AFGHANISTAN -- TO SEE SECURITY AS THE MEANS TO DEVELOPMENT, AND THUS TO KARZAI'S RE-ELECTION, NOT ONLY AS A SUBSET OF THE WAR ON TERRORISM.

17. (C) WHEN WE CITED OUR EARLIER DISCUSSION WITH MOD MARTINO ABOUT PRT SIZE, BRAUZZI SAID THE MILITARY WOULD HAVE TO MAKE THE FINAL DETERMINATION ON THAT ISSUE (AGAIN HINTING THAT THE DECISIONS WERE IN THE DETAILS, NOT IN WHETHER OR NOT TO AGREE). HE SUSPECTED ITALY WOULD GO WITH A LARGER, RATHER THAN A SMALLER, PRT IN ORDER TO MINIMIZE RISK. WE POINTED OUT THAT A LARGER PRT COULD ACTUALLY INCREASE VULNERABILITIES BECAUSE OF ITS LARGER FOOTPRINT. AS FOR TIMING, BRAUZZI SAID A JANUARY 2004 START WOULD BE "TOUGH", BUT THE MILITARY WOULD HAVE TO PROVIDE THE FINAL ASSESSMENT AND REPLY ON THE DETAILS. BOTH MEN ADDED THAT ITALY WAS FULLY AWARE OF THE PRIORITIES AND NEEDS IN AFGHANISTAN. "WE PUT OURSELVES UNDER A TIGHT TIMELINE IN BONN," DI MAIO SAID RUEFULLY TO A/POLMINCOUNS, BOTH OF WHOM PARTICIPATED IN THE BONN NEGOTIATIONS.

18. (C) DI MAIO NOTED THAT ITALY HAS A LONG-STANDING RELATIONSHIP IN GHAZNI, THROUGH AN ITALIAN NGO, THE "INSTITUTE FOR AFRICA, THE MIDDLE EAST AND ASIA." THIS ENTITY HAS BEEN WORKING WITH AFGHANS IN GHAZNI TO PROTECT CULTURAL HERITAGE AND TREASURES THERE FOR A NUMBER OF YEARS, SENDING MISSIONS APPROXIMATELY TWICE A YEAR. DI MAIO SAID HE IS ATTEMPTING TO CONTACT THE INDIVIDUALS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE PROJECT TO HEAR THEIR IMPRESSIONS OF GHAZNI, INCLUDING THE SECURITY SITUATION THERE.

19. (C) ON OTHER TOPICS, DI MAIO REPORTED ON THE PRESIDENT'S OCTOBER 31 TELEPHONE CALL TO PRIME MINISTER BERLUSCONI, REQUESTING ITALY TO ACCELERATE DISBURSEMENT OF ITS PLEDGED ASSISTANCE TO AFGHANISTAN (REFS D, E). ITALY HAS ALREADY DISBURSED ALMOST 90 PERCENT OF ITS PLEDGE, HE BELIEVED, SO ACCELERATED DISBURSEMENT MIGHT NOT BE ALL THAT MEANINGFUL. (MFA OFFICE DIRECTOR FOR DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE TO ASIA, AFRICA AND LATIN AMERICA, ALESSANDRO GAUDIANO, TOLD ECONOFF ESSENTIALLY THE SAME THING, SAYING ITALY HAS ACCELERATED DISBURSEMENTS OVER THE LAST SEVERAL MONTHS.) HOWEVER, ITALY WOULD LIKE TO FIND STILL MORE FUNDS TO ASSIST IN THE UPCOMING ELECTIONS. THIS WOULD BE COMPLICATED, DI MAIO WARNED, BECAUSE THE MONEY WOULD NOT COME FROM WITHIN THE MFA, BUT ITALY WAS INTENT ON FINDING ADDITIONAL RESOURCES. ON ELECTIONS, DI MAIO ASKED IF THE U.S. HAD TAKEN A POSITION ON WHETHER PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS SHOULD BE HELD PRIOR TO GENERAL ELECTIONS, AS A WAY TO STRENGTHEN PRESIDENT KARZAI'S POSITION VIS-A-VIS "THE PANJSHIRIS." FINALLY, DI MAIO SAID THE EU TROIKA, LED BY ITALIAN MFA U/S FOR ASIA AND HUMAN RIGHTS MARGHERITA BONIVER TO KABUL OCTOBER 18-21, EXTRACTED A COMMITMENT FROM KARZAI THAT THE NEW CONSTITUTION WOULD PROVIDE THAT ELECTIONS WOULD "ABIDE BY" INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS. THE TROIKA WAS DEEPLY DISTURBED BY THE INFLUENCE OF THE NARCOTICS TRADE IN AFGHANISTAN. DI MAIO WORRIED ABOUT THE NEGATIVE INFLUENCE NARCOTRAFFICKERS COULD PLAY ON THE UPCOMING ELECTIONS.

110. (C) COMMENT: DI MAIO TOLD US ITALY WOULD WELCOME ANY ADDITIONAL INPUT THAT SHOULD BE CONSIDERED IN FORMULATING ITS ASSESSMENT OF OUR REQUESTS, BUT SUCH INPUT SHOULD PREFERABLY ARRIVE PRIOR TO NOVEMBER 10. WE NOTE FROM REF F THAT THE CONCEPT OF PRTS UNDER NATO-ISAF LEADERSHIP SEEMS TO BE WINNING ACCEPTANCE, BUT WOULD BE HAPPY TO FORWARD WASHINGTON VIEWS ON THIS, OR ANY OTHER ASPECT, TO OUR ITALIAN INTERLOCUTORS.

111. (U) KABUL MINIMIZE CONSIDERED.
SEMBLER

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